

The Bishop of London's Second Letter to the Clergy of his Diocese.

Good Brother,

TH E several Proclamations, Commissions and other Orders His Majesty has given out for the suppressing and extirpation of Popery, since the discovery of the Hellish Plot of the Papists, could not but come to your knowledge; And when you consider how particularly we of the Clergy are concern'd in interest, as well as Conscience to put to our helping hand: you cannot, I am sure, think any consideration of more Importance, than how we may be found in the best Posture of contributing our Aid against this common Enemy. Therefore I was careful to make the strongest Impression I could upon you, for a vigorous prosecution of those Laws against Popery, which are peculiarly our Province, that we might not be found in the midst of so general an Alarm, doing the work of the Lord negligently. To this end I did the last Summer earnestly entreat you to execute the 65. 66. Canons, and the Third of the Constitutions of Forty, according as the state of your respective Parishes should require: and likewise for a farther proof of your preparation to encounter the Adversary in Three several Conferences, to give me your sense of these following Points.

I. The half Communion.

A More hardy thing certainly was never undertaken by men, than directly in the face of an Institution of *Christ's* own appointment, to enjoin the contrary practice, *Christ* hath said, *Drink ye all of this*: But says the Papist in the Council of *Constance*, *Sess. 13.* *Christ indeed Instituted the Communion under both kinds, but to avoid the dangers, and propable scandals that may happen, we do forbid the Administration of the Cup at all to the Laity, and generally to any, but to him that Officiates.* It would be consider'd, whether the positive command of *Christ*, or that of the Council is to be obey'd, as it is attended with the reasons of inconvenience. I do presume a positive command of God cannot be disobey'd without guilt, unless upon some one or more of these Grounds: Either 1. That God dispenses with it, as he did with Circumcision in the Wilderness. Or 2. That some evil greater than the consequence of the non-performance of it will certainly follow; as when *David* ate the *Shew-bread* and they that were with him, which depends upon that Rule of our Saviour, which though apply'd to the Sabbath, yet extends to all other positive commands, that man was not made for them, but they for man: Or lastly, in case of incapacity, as the Children of *Israel* not going up to *Jerusalem* in the time of captivity. And I beseech you, what has the inconveniency alledg'd by the Papists to do with any of these Reservations? For they do not pretend to a simple Dispensation, which can proceed from God only, whose Institution it is. Nor to an incapacity. Then for the inconvenience alledg'd, the spilling the Wine, &c. It is not attended with one just circumstance. It should be certain, whereas it is only probable, it should be of equal weight to the disobedience, and is not; nay, without questioning the wisdom of God, it cannot be, because it should be something that falls out extraordinarily, whereas this was a perpetual objection from the first Institution, so that you must either say, *Christ* was not aware of this inconvenience, which had the same aspect upon this part of the Sacrament then, as it has now, and naturally must have whilst the World endures; or else he did not think it of consequence to hinder the receiving the Wine as well as the Bread. As for those frivolous pretences of the usage sometimes, to Administer in one kind to Children or to the Sick, or the carrying home of the Consecrated Bread. To the first it is very improbable that ever it was so done, or if it was, the Authority is so slender, as is not worth consideration: To the second, whatever superstitious usage there was of carrying home the Bread, it is plain, none received at the hands of the Minister, but under both kinds. To omit the constant Authority of the Fathers in this case, I will only set down what Pope *Gelasius de Consecr. diff. 2. cap. comperimus*: commands those who through some superstition abstained from the Cup, that they should either receive the Sacrament compleat and entire, or be entirely rejected: that the separating one and the same Mystery, could not be done without gross Sacrilege. And now I conclude with *Cassander, Consult. art. 22. de administratione S. Sancti Sacramenti Eucharistiae.* It is evident the universal Church to this very day; the Western for above a Thousand years after *Christ*, did Administer the Wine as well as Bread to all the Members of *Christ's* Church: which is manifest from a cloud of Witnesses, ancient Greek and Latin Authors, who founded themselves upon the Institution and Example of our Lord.

II. Prayers in an unknown Tongue.

IF Scripture or Reason might prevail, this practice could never have pass'd among the Sons of men: but, whilst interest and other indirect ends are the scope of too many that profess Religion, it is no wonder if darkness be upheld for light. The Holy Ghost says expressly, *1 Cor. 14.* That the Church should not allow Praying in an unknown Tongue, unless somebody be by to Interpret; because, otherwise the unlearned could not say, *Amen.* Whereby it appears that the Intention, as well as Pronunciation of the supplicant is required. And indeed, how can it be imagin'd otherwise, that God should expect less than the offering up to him what he has given us, not to talk like *Parots*, but with our understanding a reasonable Sacrifice? And how can that be, when the best pretence Papists have, is, that the People have a general notice of what it is they Pray for. If they are capable of a particular, does not the Church of *Rome* make them come short in their duty to God, in hindring them from a compleat performance? For certainly no general notion can make that Impression, as a distinct understanding of every term of expression would do. Therefore says *Amalarius*, the unlearned hearing what he understands not, knows not what he Prays for, and therefore answers not, *Amen.* *De divin. offic. l. 3. c. 9.* So all the Fathers that have treated of this matter.

III. Prayers to Saints.

PRAYERS to Saints as they are used and authorized in the Church of *Rome* are Idolatry, and as they are apply'd by the Vulgar, gross Idolatry. This must be acknowledg'd, that whoever holds Communion with the Church of *Rome*, must Pray to Saints after the same external manner, as he Prays to God, that is, he kneels down and worships in Gods house at the solemn time of Gods service by a Form set down in the Liturgy. He bowes before the Saints Image in the house of God, and offers up Incense. In short, there is no outward part of Divine Worship omitted. Now I would fain know how it is possible to avoid the just imputation of Idolatry, when the first and second Commandment are so many ways intrenched upon? Here is another object besides God fallen down before, and Worshipped in the house of God, joyned with the service of God. And what if there be a difference of address in the expression and degree of Devotion, can that take off the scandal given to the greatest part of the World, who judge by the eye, and cannot judge otherwise? Does that answer that chastity of Worship, which God has so suitably to our understandings expressed himself to expect from us: *For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God?* But (alas!) when we consider the superstitious nature of mankind, how apt to run after other Gods, how unable to resist the stronger impression of the more sensible Object, be the other never so considerable; nay, when we consider the demonstration of this by constant experience, that we see the common People in *Papish Countries* run so fast into the sensible Devotion of their Fellow-Creatures, that they have let go their hold on *Christ* the Head. *Coloss. cap. 2.* and have forgot God; their Guardian Angels, and protecting Saints fill their Hearts and Souls, and through will-Worship and affected Humility, God is hardly in all their thoughts: how ought we to fly from such Temptation, as from the Plague, and declare with *S. Austin*, that we honour the Saints in Love, and not in Worship, *Hieref. 39. de vera Rel.*

And thus I have given you a brief hint, of what I hope shortly you will with the former Conferences have in full measure, and what I must needs confess was by many of you carefully and accurately discussed. You cannot in so narrow a compass expect more than the state of a question, which will however (I hope) answer my purpose to mind you of your own conceptions, and what in the Conferences you heard from others, and to admonish you of your duty from the above recited Canons; that you would not neglect at the same time your Reputation and Safety so profligately, when the mystery of Iniquity is undermining of us with both hands, as to sit still, whilst the Law has impowered you to act. Therefore I expect at my Visitation to read so good fruit of your care and diligence in this matter, that I may be enabled to assure with confidence, that there is not a Recusant has escaped our notice. I pray God give you courage and zeal suitable to your Profession, and equal to the many strivings our poor Church lyes under at this time.

Fulham, July 6. 1680.

Sir,
Your Affectionate Friend and Brother,
H. London.

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